



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2008
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CRM
(202) 514-2007
TDD (202) 514-1888

FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS ARIZONA MAN FOR DISTRIBUTING AND POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WASHINGTON –A federal jury in Phoenix returned guilty verdicts on numerous counts charging Paul Richard Butts, 38, of Apache Junction, Ariz., with the distribution and possession of child pornography, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona Diane J. Humetewa announced today.

Butts was tried before U.S. District Judge Mary H. Murguia on charges developed from an undercover FBI operation designed to combat the distribution of child pornography over peer-to-peer file-sharing software. Peer-to-peer software programs permit computer users connected to the Internet to link computers around the world, for the purpose of sharing files.

At trial, the jury heard evidence that Butts used the peer-to-peer program “iMesh” to distribute child pornography to undercover FBI agents on August 10, 2005. A search warrant executed at Butts’ home on October 6, 2005, resulted in the seizure of computers and numerous hard drives, external storage devices and computer discs containing child pornography. Computer forensic analysis performed on the seized materials revealed that Butts had in excess of 24,000 images of child pornography.

A second superseding indictment filed in the case charged Butts with one count of using the iMesh software to distribute child pornography to the undercover agents on August 10, 2005, as well as 15 counts of possessing child pornography on October 6, 2005 - one possession count for each separate storage device that belonged to him and on which child pornography was found. Butts represented himself at the trial and proceeded *pro se*, with the assistance of advisory counsel. After hearing testimony for three days, the jury found him guilty of the child pornography distribution count, as well as 15 child pornography possession counts.

Sentencing has been scheduled for May 12, 2008. At that time, Butts faces a maximum sentence of 20 years for the distribution count, a maximum sentence of 10 years for each possession count and up to a \$250,000 fine for each of the 16 counts on which he was convicted. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Murguia will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by the guidelines in determining a sentence.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sharon K. Sexton of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Phoenix and Trial Attorney James Silver of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section in the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. The investigation was conducted by the FBI and involved cooperation between agents based in Arizona, Idaho and Wisconsin.

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